RAJYA SABHA

Wednesday, the 28th August, 1991/6 Bhadra, 1913 (Saka)

The House met at eleven of the clock, Mr. Chairman in the Chair.

ORAL ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

Telephone connections to registrants under the OYT category in Delhi and Bombay

*41. SHRI MENTAY PADMANABHAM:†

SHRI SURESH KALMADI:

Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that Government have decided to provide telephone connections only to those who have registered under OT category in Delhi and Bombay;

(b) if so, whether it would not further prolong the wait of nearly five lakh people who have been waiting for more than ten years to get a telephone connection under the general category in these two cities; and

(c) what steps Government propose to take to help the affected people registered under the general category ?

THE DEPUTY MINISTER IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS (SHRI P. V. RANGAYYA NAIDU): (a) and (b) No, Sir. The telephone connections are being provided in Delhi and Bombay under both the categories, namely OYT and Non-OYT (including General).

(c) Efforts are being made to provide general category applicants registered upto Deecmber 1984. telephone connections by March 1992. Capacity expansion programmes would also continue further to successively clear the remaining waiting lists.

SHRI MENTAY PADMANABHAM: Sir, the Minister's reply is misleading. It has been reported in a section of the Press that the Telecom Department has decided to give priority only to people registered under the OYT category.

श्री अरविन्द गणेश कुलकर्णी : आप प्रेस की स्टेटमेंट में सही मानते हैं या मिनिस्टर की ?

SHRI MENTAY PADMANABHAM: I am coming to that. That is the reason why I said in the beginning itself that the Minister's reply is misleading. Let the Minister share the information with the House. (*Interruptions*) My charge against the Minister is that he is not sharing the information with the House. Let the Minister contradict it. I will congratulate him if he contradicts it and then comes out with all the facts.

Sir, as it is, the requisite percentage in the case of the people registered under the non-OYT category is only a token. The 'Own Your Telephone' scheme is mainly intended to augment the resources of the Telecom Department. Only those people who can afford to pay Rs. 8,000 for a conneciton will get it. The ordinary customer who pays Rs. 800 for a telephone connection is at a disadvantageous position. The Telecom Department is a public utility service. The should treat all citizens equally without any discrimination, without imposing any additional charges and give priority over to those people...

MR. CHAIRMAN: Has he introduced this OYT category ?

SHRI MENTAY PADMANABHAM: The Government has introduced this. The Telecom Department has introduced this OYT category.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Recently ?

SHRI MENTAY PADMANABHAM: Not recently, over a period of time.

MR. CHAIRMAN: For how many decades?

SHRI MENTAY PADMANABHAM: I do not know, let the Minister explain, but this system of OYT itself is discriminatary. That is what I would like to

†The question was actually asked on the floor of the House by Shri Mentay Padmanabham.

point out. My first supplementary is, what are the existing rules with respect to release of telephones under OYT, non-OYT and other categories?

THE MINISTER OF STATE (INDEPENDENT CHARGE) OF THE MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS (SHRI RAJESH PILOT): Mr. Chairman, Sir, I do share the feeling of the hon. Member that there should not be any discrimination and that is the policy of the Government, but he will also share my views that we are a developing country, we have to share, who can afford we charge him slightly more and also help a person who cannot afford that much. We are giving phone connections to each panchayat. All these schemes have to be backed by some resources. So, the Government has to take a balanced view, where the progress is also not hampered and burden is shared by a section of society who can afford it. We have two categories of telephone registration, OYT and non-OYT. The hon. Member is aware—you yourself also headed this Department at one time...

SHRI DIPEN GHOSH: At that time OYT was not there.

SHRI RAJESH PILOT: OYT was introduced with the sole aim, what the hon. Member has said, to take more revenue and give a slight priority. That is why, when the new Government took over, we thought that we must bring this difference to that degree where OYT gets within six months or so and non-OYT within another two or three months, not much gap, so that that feeling is not there. Today the general category telephone waitlist in Delhi is from 1979. OYT registrant is also waiting from round about 1982 to 1983, if I am correct, I have to verify. So, we took a decision that by 31st December, 1991,w e will get all OYT registration cleared up to June 1991. So, there will be a gap of six months. Similarly, we have also taken a decision that all general category registration in Delhi and Bombay will be brought up to December 1984. So, there will be a gap of about five years. I do agree that the difference is there, but one has to take initiative to clear the difference and start afresh. Our aim is that exchanges below 5000, it should be on demand; exchanges above 5000 lines, it should be not more than a year. That is why in this year of 1991-92 we are giving 7 lakh connections by March 1992 all over the country so that we catch up with the waiting list. Efforts are being made on the production side also. As on today, the demand is rising. It is a good news for the Department, but production must catch up and with the new industrial policy of the Government we are very hopeful that we will catch up with the production and we will be able to meet the demand of communication by the common man.

SHRI MENTAY PADMANABHAM: I wanted to know the proportion, ratio. For example, if they are giving hundred OYT connections, how many are they giving in non-OYT and other categories? Is there any fixed norm, ratio or rule worked out by the Department?

SHRI RAJESH PILOT: I forgot. The ratio is 40 : 60, that is, 40 OYT connections and 60 non-OYT.

SHRI MENTAY PADMANABHAM: This is really unfortunate because those who have paid Rs. 8000 are given 40 per cent of the connections and those who have paid Rs. 800 or Rs. 1000 are given only 60 per cent. The number of applications in the general category are hundred times more, maybe, two or three hundred times more than the OYT applications pending with the Department. So, this ratio is unjust and it will be very very disadvantous to those who have registered themselves in the second category.

My second supplementary is this. The hon. Minister is kind enough to say that he would clear all the applications pending up to 1984 by March 1992. Then when will those applications which are pending after 1984 be cleared? Will they be cleared in this century or will they be cleared in the next century? Now, by way

of deposits the Department is getting a lot of money, millions and millions of rupees, from the General Category people alone, and this money is being wasted on fancy schemes like C-Dot, car telephone scheme and all those. What is all this? Let the Minister come out with a White Paper on how much money is being spent on C-Dot, car telephone scheme and other fancy schemes floated by the Ministry previously.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Let us confine ourselves to Delhi and Bombay only.

SHRI SUBRAMANIAN SWAMY: C-Dot is not a fancy scheme. It is a practical scheme.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Let us not go to C-Dot. We are only on Bombay and Delhi.

SHRI MENTAY PADMANABHAM: Sir, I would like to know whether the Minister will take steps to throw overboard all the fancy schemes and invest the surplus money in capacity expansion programmes and also in providing better customer services and also to bring down the tariffs which have been escalating from budget to budget. The tariff that the telephone consumer in India is paying is rather incomparable with any other country in the world. Taking into consideration the per capita income of the country, fantastic amounts are being paid by the telephone consumers.

SHRI RAJESH PILOT: Mr. Chairman Sir, as far as the waiting list is concerned, it could be a parameter for efficiency and inefficiency, both. When I say efficiency, it means, if we give connections then only people will demand. So, both ways we have to look at it. But, as I said, this year itself we are giving seven lakh connections with a total outstanding, all over the country of 20 lakhs. So you could see that we are moving forward at a very high speed so that we catch up as soon as possible. Now if I say that I will clear by the year so and so, the registration every day is going very high. It is a very good indication but, as I have said, we should have back-up of the production. So I assure the honourable Member that our aim is that the day a customer or a citizen of the country wants a telephone, he must be given on demand, if not at the same time, at least, after six months' time at the maximum or slightly more. But that is our target, and for that we are putting in our efforts.

Another point that the honourable Member has raised is about fancy schemes. Sir, now it differs. A scheme which might be fancy for the honourable Member may not be fancy for another honourable Member. He has mentioned about car phones and other things.

SHRI MENTAY PADMANABHAM: Fancy for the Minister.. (*Interruptions*)...

SHRI RAJESH PILOT: It is not the Minister alone who makes the schemes. It is the House which makes the schemes. Any schemes which we make, they all come to you, we get them approved by the House and then we implement them. As far as the tariff is concerned, honourable Chairman, Sir, if you remember, we just moved a proposal for three-minute metering which I found every Member was against in both the Houses, that it might not be practical and it will be a burden on the subscriber. The honourable Member has mentioned that our tariff is very high. Thirty countries in the world are metering but we are not following them because really we cannot compare every step of our movements. We are a developing country. These people have their own other resources. So, let us not compare totally on everything. We wanted to meter it but we found that there is a resentment. But we are still taking views from different forums. So, about fancy schemes that concern cities like Bombay. I said in the House that we will give car phones to people who wanted them and who can afford it in foreign exchange, and I have also said that whatever money we earn from them, out of that we will give phones to the slums in Bombay. Now, if we do not use such schemes, then it means we are defeating the purpose of helping the common man. Just because one can afford it, we don't give him though I can make money out of a person who can afford it, in order to give something to another poor citizen's. Well, it is the duty of the Government and that is how progress takes

place. So I do not totally agree with the honourable Member that these are fancy schemes. We have to arn money somewhere. I was just now telling the honourable. Surface Transport Minister that we had taken a decision that on the National Highways, for every 50 kilometres we would give a public telephone booth from where you could contact the next station. In hospitals we have given a free telephone all over the country. Now all these have to be backed up, there have to be some resources somewhere and we have to be backed up by some schemes which are necessary for the country. Now, for one telephone everywhere in the hospitals, free calls at all times, who will pay for that? There has to be some resource in the Department, which I can pool in for that. So, there has to be a balance from where I can squeeze money from my friends. I must squeeze it for a friend who cannot afford it. This also we are going to continue. Then only can we march with the requirement of the development.

SHRI MENTAY PADMANABHAM: Are you contemplating any change in the proportion of 40 : 60 between OYT and non-OYT?

SHRI RAJESH PILOT: As I have said, we want to finish the waiting list.

SHRI MENTAY PADMANABHAM: The people who have registered after 1984 will get it in the 21st century.

SHRI RAJESH PILOT: Pardon my saying. I really could not get the intention of your question. The question is that we must reduce the waiting list. Of a person registered in 1979, let me quote an example. The hon. Member will bear me out. I have got a letter, Mr. Chairman, Sir, from an old man in Pritampura. He has registered for a phone in 1983-84. He writes to me, "Mr. Pilot, there is a house next to mine. He has got three connections. He constructed his house three years back. I constructed my house three years earlier. I am a retired Under Secretary. I registered and I am keeping quiet. And this gentleman, with his approach for out-of-turn quota, has taken three." I felt bad for a minute. He is also a citizen.

MR. CHAIRMAN: He must have got on MPs' recommendations.

SHRI RAJESH PILOT: Out of turn he got them. All these imbalances we are bearing because the demand is so much. But our aim is that. When the telephone is available on demand, all these will be over. As I said, this is a barometer of efficiency and inefficiency, both. But I think that it will be efficiency that there is both, the waiting list is there and also the clearance of the waiting list goes hand in hand.

MR. CHAIRMAN: This is probably efficiency.

डा० अबरार अहमद : सभापति महोदय, वैसे तो माननीय मंत्री जी संचार सुविधाओं के लिए बहुत महत्वपूर्ण कदम उठा रहे हैं जिसके लिए मैं उनको धन्यवाद देता हूं । मैं एक बात माननीय मंत्री जी से जानना चाहता हूं चाहे किसी भी श्रेणी का टेलीफोन हो उस टेलीफोन के लगने के पहले एक आदेश निकलता है जी०एम० के यहां से जिसे ओ०बी० कहते हैं । अभी जयपुर में चार दिन.... (व्यवधान)

श्री सभापति : यह तो दिल्ली और बम्बई का सवाल है । दिल्ली के बारे में सवाल कीजिये ।

डा० अबरार अहमद : सभापति महोदय, यह बात तो दिल्ली में भी होगी।

श्री सभापति : जयपुर अभी दिल्ली में नहीं आया ।

डा० अबरार अहमद : जयपुर के बारे में मुझे स्पेसेफिक जानकारी मिली है ।

श्री सभापति : अलग से बात कर लेना, राजस्थान के दोनों हो, कोई दिक्कत नहीं है । I cannot permit.

डा० अबरार अहमद : मैं सिर्फ यह जानना चाहता हूं कि दिल्ली और बम्बई में या जयपुर में या देश के किसी भी हिस्से में जो ओ० बी० निकाली गई थी क्या वह वापिस ले ली गई है, यह मैं माननीय मंत्री जी से जानना चाहता हूं । मैं यह मान कर चलता हूं कि मंत्री जी को शायद इसकी जानकारी नहीं होगी (व्यवधान) उनकी जानकारी में है या नहीं ।

श्री हरबेन्द्र सिंह हंसपाल : दिल्ली में भी ऐसे बहुत से केसेज हैं जिनको ओ० बी० इश्यू हो चुकी है लेकिन वापिस ले ली गई है (व्यवधान)

श्री दीपेन घोष : मैं कलकत्ता का पूछने वाला हूं ।

श्री सभापति : अब यह कलकत्ता का पूछने वाले हैं ।

SHRI RAJESH PILOT: I will reply to that.

श्री प्रमोद महाजन : मैं बम्बई का पूछने वाला हूं । (व्यवधान)

SHRI RAJESH PILOT: Sir, before you came to the House, I was discussing with some of my colleagues. It is a problem. What happens is that for out-of-turn connections we give sanction. It goes to the CGM, and it becomes an order book. For a monh or two months it does not really get implemented. I share this, and I am aware of this. I was talking to my colleagues whether I should take a decision that the hon. Members of Parliament who have a quota of 15 telephones—I can give this authority to the CGM—can contact him directly and give instructions there so that it is easier to get it implemented. From Delhi it goes to the CGM. Then, further your asking and my asking is a long procedure. If the House approves it, I can take a decision that the CGM will directly give them telephones. If it is out of the State, it is the CGM who will coordinate and get the connection.

SHRI PRAMOD MAHAJAN: If I recommend about five telephones which are allotted in different parts of the country, I will have to write to every CGM.

SHRI RAJESH PILOT: Mr. Chairman, Sir, it will be the responsibility of the CGM to get it to you wherever you want it. It will be directly coordinated by him.

MR. CHAIRMAN: So far as the House is concerned, we are interested in the telephones. How you do it is your business. Let every MP get his quota.

SHRI KAMAL MORARKA: The CGMs does not listen to the Ministry. Will they listen to us ? The Ministry should not wash its hands off.

SHRI RAJESH PILOT: That was so three months back, not now.

SHRI DIPEN GHOSH: Sir, I will try to put my supplementary strictly confined to the question. It is arising out of the question.

This "OYT" is a sort of misnomer because "OYT" stands for "Own Your Telephone". But nobody owns a telephone. Only his money is collected by the Telecom Department in order to buy some extra fittings, accessories or equipment necessary for giving that connection. There is another category called "Tatkal" category. You pay Rs. 30,000 and immediately a connection is given. The main question of Mr. Padmanabham was about the attitude of that department. Whoever pays money for the OYT or 'Tatkal' the department takes extra care because they are getting money. Thereby the non-OYT category gets slightly neglected. They are lost sight of because they don't pay money. But if one goes by the total amount received by the Department on account of deposits received from non-OYT sub-

scribers, that money is very huge. That money is also being invested. The non-OYT applicants are not getting the benefit to that extent. That is his idea.

MR. CHAIRMAN: You put your question.

SHRI DIPEN GHOSH: My supplementary is, when you receive money on account of OYT or 'Tatkal' and you give them an expeditious connection, afterwards their maintenance and operation part are taken along with the non-OYT. The department does not take care of seeing that OYT and 'Tatkal' connections from whom they have received money function properly.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Will you see to it that OYT and 'Tatkal' connections function? I have put your question in short. You know already 21 minutes have gone on this question.

SHRI DIPEN GHOSH: I would like to know whether the Government proposes to take extra care in seeing that the telephones under OYT and 'Tatkal' schemes function uninterruptedly.

SHRI RAJESH PILOT: As I have said earlier, the idea behind the OYT and Tatkal schemes was to earn more revenue. Frankly speaking, the 'Tatkal' scheme has failed totally. It is never 'Tatkal'. I accept that. If there is no line available in that exchange, even 'Tatkal' cannot be given. I would agree if the line is available it must be given on merit. So, 'Tatkal' has not met with the intention of whoever had introduced it. That is why we are re-considering all these things. That is why I said in my first reply that this Department is basically a service department. I am not expecting it to function as a commercial department. But to do a better service I have got to have a commercial input into it. Then only I can serve better.

As far as the OYT scheme is concerned, we take about Rs. 8,000 from the applicants. This amount is adjusted in their rental in the next 20 years. So, it is just an immediate help to the department to raise resources. As far as the maintenance part is concerned, we have taken a decision. I have said in conferences that whenever a telephone is unserviceable, they must complain. After the complaint is registered, within 24 hours we will rectify the fault. If it is a major fault, we will inform the subscriber saying we are sorry it will take another ten days to rectify it. This is a very noble idea. But please bear with us for some time. To implement it we might have some problems for a week or ten days, but we want to improve the efficiency so that customers become an asset to the department.

MR. CHAIRMAN: You will see that MPs' telephones function during the rainy season this year.

SHRI RAJESH PILOT: Yes, Sir.

SHRI A. G. KULKARNI: It might be an innocent misunderstanding that OYT scheme is some sort of discrimination. It is not so. The OYT scheme is necessary particularly for some categories. It is necessary for small industries and exporters. In Bombay and Delhi I have found many complaints from small industrialists. They are exporters. Unless they have a communication with the world, what can they do? Then there is another category of aged persons like you and me. You know this category. In Bombay very recently I met a gentleman called Mr. Chatre who is 84 years old. He lives with his wife and sister. They are staying somewhere in a suburb. How can they contact a doctor? So OYT should not be treated as a luxury scheme or anything like that. So this scheme should continue because if this scheme is not there from where can you get money? There will not be any economic development. So this scheme is an input for developing the economy. This should be continued. As you have rightly said even in this OYT scheme also there are pending cases. For heaven's sake, please complete the list of pending cases in respect of exporters, older generation and medical practitioners. This is an essential item for these people not for

black marketeers and other people.

MR. CHAIRMAN: He has understood it. He wants to know about the pending cases in respect of exporters and the old people.

SHRI RAJESH PILOT: Sir, I totally share the advice of the hon. Member. We will implement the advice of the hon. Member and we are following the same method suggested by him. In regard to exhausting the waiting list for telephone connections under OYT both in Delhi and Bombay, we were able to complete up to June, 1991.

SHRI A. G. KULKARNI: Mofussil area of the country is very vast.

SHRI RAJESH PILOT: The question was about Delhi and Bombay.

MR. CHAIRMAN: He asked about the old people and medical practitioners.

SHRI RAJESH PILOT: Under the OYT scheme the old people have got some quota. The hon. Member has mentioned about a particular case where they could not get a telephone connection. He can write to me about it and I will look into it.

SHRI DINESHBHAI TRIVEDI: Mr. Chairman, Sir, I am really concerned about the kind of social order we want to have in this country. Do you want to eliminate...

MR. CHAIRMAN: Put your question.

SHRI DINESHBHAI TRIVEDI: One minute, Sir.

MR. CHAIRMAN: We have already spent 26 minutes.

SHRI DINESHBHAI TRIVEDI: I am coming to the point.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Come to the point. That is all.

SHRI DINESHBHAI TRIVEDI: The point is, we are talking of *tatkal* telephone connections. What is happening is that a signal is going from the Government of India that we are rewarding the dishonest and punishing the honest people whether it is amnesty for the black-marketeers or tax-evaders. This disparity cannot continue. The Minister's statement is very reassuring when he said "It should be on merit." I am very happy about it. I would like to know from the Minister: (1) Would he consider abolishing the *tatkal* and car telephone connections? (2) If people are ready to pay foreign exchange for a telephone connection would he give it? May I know from the Minister whether he would ask them to pay their telephone bills also in foreign exchange? I suggest to the Minister that their telephone tariff should be at least ten times more than ordinary telephone subscribers.

SHRI RAJESH PILOT: As I said earlier, we want to earn more revenue specially out of *tatkal* phones and car phones. So far as abolishing this scheme is concerned, it will not help us much. Just for giving a car phone in Delhi itself, today we are charging Rs. 1 lakh towards deposit from the person who gets a car phone; and we are charging Rs. 4000 as rent. So it is an income from them. But the capacity is not that much what is needed today. We have got capacity for round about 277 but only 177 or 180 are functioning I was just telling my officer who was travelling with me "There are so many departments. Please give them phones so that we can earn Rs. 10 lakhs".

MR. CHAIRMAN: He talked about the foreign exchange.

SHRI RAJESH PILOT: I am just telling you about the intention of the department which is to earn more revenue.

As far as the foreign exchange is concerned, as I said in Bombay, they could give us foreign exchange worth of Rs. 1 lakh and register their names for a phone. At the moments we have got 2000 applications where we can give phones. We will evolve a scheme for it. About charging the tariff up to ten times

or twelve times, I am ready to discuss it with the hon. Member and find out what is practicable. Let us not do it now so that nobody registers for it. I can have his views incorporated in the scheme.

*42. [*The questioner (Shri S. S. Ahluwalia) was absent. For answer* vide col. 34-35 infra.]

Fake passport rackets

†43. SHRI CHIMANBHAI MEHTA:
SHRI SARADA MOHANTY:

Will the Minister of HOME AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that fake passport rackets are on the increase;

(b) what are the details of fake passports cases unearthed at various international air-ports of the country; and

(c) whether persons involved in these criminal acts have been prosecuted and punished; if so, what is their number during the last three years?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF PARLIAMENTARY AFFAIRS AND THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF HOME AFFAIRS (SHRI M. M. JACOB): (a), (b) and (c) The information is being collected from States and will be laid on the Table of the House.

SHRI CHIMANBHAI MEHTA: Sir, in fact, this being a very sensitive issue and in view of the terrorism and other things happening in the country, I thought that some details might come because here, the State Home Ministries are not involved. The question relates to regional passport offices which are under the control of the Central Government. The External Affairs Ministry and the Home Ministry can correlate with them. I can understand if you are going to give an exhaustive annual report when we may wait.

MR. CHAIRMAN: They want to give the correct and full details. That is what they are doing. You must appreciate.

SHRI CHIMANBHAI MEHTA: I do appreciate that they are going to give it. But they can give at least some details which were available in newspapers. I have not quoted the name of the newspaper.

MR. CHAIRMAN: You put your question.

SHRI CHIMANBHAI MEHTA: Therefore, I am asking the Government whether they know the *modus operandi*, whether they know how this racket is going on, whether the photographs are changed and whether the regional passport offices are involved and collaborating. On these vital issues, I am asking this question.

SHRI M. M. JACOB: Sir, in my reply, I have said that information is being collected from various States. The External Affairs Ministry is in charge of the regional passport offices. And as soon as a crime is detected and registered, it is the respective State Governments which would pursue the matter. In this context, we have to collect information from various States to be appropriate. That is why I gave the assurance in the beginning that it would be collected and furnished.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Have you any information that some Regional Passport Officers are also involved in this fake passport business? That is his question.

SHRI CHIMANBHAI MEHTA: Yes.

SHRI M. M. JACOB: I do not have any information at present about that.

SHRI CHIMANBHAI MEHTA: I have read it in a newspaper some days back. I am not able to give the date.

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†The question was actually asked on the floor of the House by Shri Chimanbhai Mehta.